

Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman Commissioner Michael J. Copps Commissioner Robert M. McDowell Commissioner Mignon Clyburn Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker Federal Communications Commission 445 Twelfth Street SW
Washington, DC 20554
Re: CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

Imagine yourself with only a landline telephone (no text, email, internet, cell phone mobility); then imagine having to write a letter using only a typewriter and having to get to the post office to mail it. What a slow and cumbersome process this is; the same way people feel about going back to using a TTY.

I am deeply concerned that you will force Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing consumers to revert back to using a TTY as a telecommunication device instead of the Video Relay Service (VRS) by cutting the rate in half.

The Sorenson VRS allows Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing individuals to communicate fluently in their native language of American Sign Language (ASL) as opposed to the TTY that uses written English. I have witnessed first hand the ease of making a call via Sorenson VRS. Deaf and Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing individuals can make a call through the Sorenson VRS to their doctors offices and obtain medical information in ASL, call for information-411, call to order food, and not have the person they are calling hang up in frustration that "it takes too long to communicate" as it did in the past when they called using a TTY.

Business people who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing can now join in on conference calls, do job interviews by phone, conduct their day to day job duties without restriction. There are not limits in the type of jobs a person who is Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing can perform. These people are fully integrated into our workforce. In the past if a job required the person to use the telephone they were not hired-end of story! Now Deaf and Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing individuals can have access to the telephone system via Sorenson VRS.

Sorenson VRS provides equal access to communication that everyone should enjoy. I, as a hearing person receive calls from Deaf friends that has a cognitive impairment using SVRS; in the past the person could not use a TTY due to the type of impairment she has.

There are older Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing individuals as well as younger individuals who cannot read or write English - Sorenson VRS enables those people to enjoy the use of the telephone system as do their hearing counterparts. If these people had to depend on the TTY as they did in the past this communication is denied.

Reducing the rate paid to Sorenson VRS by half the amount they are receiving now will drive them out of business. This will cause undue hardship on Deaf and Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing individuals. Having hearing people in powerful positions oppressing and marginalizing them AGAIN. The digital divide is alive and well and will grow larger if VRS companies are forced to close or reduce their workforce. There is a movement to bring computers to the Third World Nations so they can compete in these modern times; but yet we want to OPPRESS and SILENCE the hands of our own citizens by taking away their right to communicate in their own language-ASL.

I hear stories how the Sorenson VRS freed Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing from dependence on family, friends and neighbors. I hear stories of people who connect with family members via Sorenson VRS that they have not spoken with in years because VRS uses modern technology and interpreters are there 24/7 to facilitate communication smoothly in their own language.

The use of Sorenson VRS in a 911 situation is critical. I have family members who are policeman, and they love the service. There is no communication breakdown as there is with the TTY. 911 Instructions can be given in ASL and both parties do not have to wait for the other person to stop typing to respond or ask a question. Imagine yourself in an emergency situation and you did not read or write English very well and the other person did not communicate in your native tongue. Imagine the wasted minutes, the precious time wasted in getting clarification if something was not understood. Imagine if your mother, child, wife, husband, grandparent needed those precious moments to save their lives. I would not want to be responsible for the death or long-term impairment that the person may suffer when a response was delayed just because a government agency was short sighted and decided to cut the rates to Sorenson VRS.

I am disappointed in the FCC for going backward instead of looking forward to the future. Cutting rates that are paid to Sorenson who is providing a vital service to so many people who have come to depend on it as a means of communication is unfathomable. When Sorenson VRS came out the doors of communication were opened for so many people. Sorenson VRS provides top-notch interpreters, customer service and are up front honest.

FCC by cutting Sorenson VRS rates you are closing and locking the doors; putting Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing individuals at a distinct disadvantage. The message is clear-the FCC relegates you to the back of the bus; Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing individuals do not have the same rights as hearing individuals. Who are they to want equal access to communication? Who are they to enjoy the freedom and right to communicate in a least restrictive way in their own language?

FCC members-think of the impact on the people's lives who use the service before you cut the rate to Sorenson VRS. I implore you to keep or increase the rate so this valuable service can continue

and grow to enhance the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing individuals.

Kam B. Stoll